

## Friends, countrymen and fellow-citizens

*Friends, Countrymen and Fellow-Citizens!*

**THE** present crisis demands your serious attention. You are not about giving your suffrages for members of the General Assembly: for men who are to *represent* you; and to whom are to be delegated the power and authority of the good people of this Commonwealth, for the important business of *legislation*. It therefore behoves you, as you value the inestimable privileges of *freemen*, to be extremely cautious and circumspect, in the choice you are to make:—You must be convinced, that very much of the public prosperity will depend on your concurring in a judicious and proper selection of persons, for this great trust. Suffer not yourselves to be misled by partial representations; not to be deluded by the false clamours of designing men: but consult the real interest of the State and the happiness of your country.

You have been addressed by persons who stile themselves “The friend of Equal Liberty.” in a printed paper, which has been artfully and industriously circulated among the people. As the evident design of that publication is to create an undue bias in the minds of the electors, by the most fallacious and groundless representations, against the “MAJORITY in those Assemblies that have ruled us for the lasts two years,” a few observations shall be made on the charges that have been exhibited against them.

The first charge adduced against that Majority, by those persons who arrogate to themselves the appellation of *the* friends to equal liberty, is, that “they have attempted to abridge the freedom of elections, by limiting the time prescribed by the Constitution for that purpose, and by introducing innovations contrary to just habits, and dangerous to liberty, in their new election law,”—To this it is only necessary to object—that no abridgment of the freedom of elections was ever designed, by limiting the time for holding the same: nor can any rational man possibly suppose, that such a thing could have been intended; as such

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an attempt would have operated more to the prejudice of the friends of the Constitution, than to that of its enemies:—The fact was, it *did so operate* at the last election. The *real* object aimed at, by limiting the time of voting, was to prevent a tumultuous and disorderly poll, at unseasonable hours of the night. The “innovations” mentioned are not specified—because *such* as they allude to, in general terms, never existed. Those parts of that law, however, which were found to be injudicious, have been repealed, with the concurrence of the Majority, and on the petition of the Constitutionals.

The second charge is—that “they have, without just cause, and under the influence of passion, abrogated a charter which had been granted by former Assembly, with a formality which placed it upon a footing with the gifts and sales of the State—And that by this act they have prostrated [patents] and titles to private as well as public property at the feet of the legislature, and thereby established a despotism in the State.”——The charter here alluded to, is the *Act of Assembly for incorporating* (what is called) the Bank of North-America. An application was made to the legislature, by a numerous body of citizens, to repeal that Act, which was deemed incompatible with the equal rights of individuals, the spirit of the Constitution, and the welfare of the State—to annul a law which conferred exclusive privileges upon a few, and that gave the sanction of the legislature to an institution, which possessed the means of power and an influence so enormous, as to endanger the liberties of the people. The directors of that Bank were fully heard before the General Assembly, by their counsel; and the subject had a thorough investigation—The law was repealed. In the last House of Assembly this business was again taken up; when, after *three days debate*, the application for the repeal of the *repealing* law was negatived, by a respectable majority.—Yet you are told, that these *two several Houses of Assembly* proceeded in this case, “without just cause, and under the influence of passion.” This charter, as it is called, neither granted or conveyed any *property*; nor did the abrogation of it take away one farthing of property from any man whatsoever:—its was totally different from patents or titles to property.

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They are charged (thirdly) with having “neglected to reduce the expences of government, and to carry the expences of such offices as yield enormous fees to the benefit of the State, thereby enriching individuals at the public expence.”—This, it was supposed, would be a *popular* string to touch on; and that, if struck, its sonorous vibrations would echo through the state: but it is *vox et [praterea?] nihil*. —Have not they lowered their own wages and those of Council?—As to other offices it is notorious, that the most lucrative in the State, (and, indeed, almost the only lucrative ones) are enjoyed by the adherents of the *Minority*; and that *they* never meant to concur in any *serious* measure for reducing the enormous salaries and office-fees of *their own friends*.

The Majority are likewise accused (fourthly) of having “adopted the dangerous expedient of issuing paper-money; which has in its consequences (we are informed) subverted private confidence, and locked up and banished specie from circulation.”—These persons need not tell us that they are inimical to paper-money—it is well known. It stands in the way of their favorite engine of *Aristocracy*, the Bank—it enables the public creditor to receive his interest; the farmer to carry on his improvements; the tradesman to get employment and pay his journeymen; and the poor to go to market. The *specie* is daily shipping off to pay for our *importations*; and, were it not for the paper-money, thousands of our people who are now employed, would be idle. But, say these people, the paper-money “*has locked up and banished specie* form circulation.”—If it has locked up the specie, it amounts to a demonstration that it is capable of supplying the place of specie; and our hard money had certainly better be ever locked up in the coffers of our citizens, subject to the calls which our *national exigencies* require, than to be transported across the Atlantic, for the fripperies and gewgaws of Europe. In fact, our *importations* are most *effectually* banishing our hard-money, *by banishing it out of the country*. In some of the most prosperous days which Pennsylvania ever experienced, the “expedient” of a paper-currency was adopted; the “morals of our people” were not *then* supposed to have been “tainted” by it; and the man who would have talked of its “dangerous” effects, would have been laughed at.

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It is said (fifthly) of the Majority—that “they have enacted a partial and unjust law for fixing the number and proportion of representatives in the General Assembly, by excluding the mechanics and manufacturers of the State from the description of taxable inhabitants:”—and (lastly) that, “by laws which tend to create an opinion of distinct interests in the minds of the farmer, merchant and mechanic, they have disturbed that harmony which ought to subsist among the citizens in a State, as the members of one great family.”—Thus ends the Catalogue.

To these concluding articles in the list, suffice it to observe—that, *previous* to the two last Assemblies, the virtuous mechanics and manufacturers of the State, labouring under the difficulties arising from the enormous importation of British fabrics, applied to the legislature session after session, for protecting duties; but in vain. In 1785, their friends, attentive to their complaints, enacted laws which afforded them relief. These laws would have proved more effectual, had not their operation been counteracted by the infamous practice of smuggling, pursued by our opponents. In the last year, some of the late city-members (in the *Minority* ) proposed to abolish the present system of taxation, and attempted to substitute in its place a POLL-TAX; by means of which the poorest mechanic in the State was to pay as heavy a tax, as the wealthiest citizen: for all estates, however great, were to be free from taxation.—Our *heads* were to have been taxed, and all alike too; whilst the rich man's property was to have been exempt!—A duty on WHEAT and FLOUR was likewise proposed by those *Minority* members; in order to prevent the laying a duty on foreign goods imported—a measure directly calculated to discourage the farmer, to cramp our exports, to facilitate importation, to distress the mechanic, and to impoverish the country. These anti-constitutional minority members, also made a proposition in the house, that no person should be permitted to vote without producing a *receipt* of his having paid *State-taxes*, in the year immediately preceding the election; though, by the constitution, the payment of any public taxes entitles a citizen to vote:—thus endeavouring to make the funding law, which exonerates the mechanic and manufacturer from paying *that particular* tax for their occupations (and which was enacted at their own request)

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operate to their prejudice—afterwards they had the baseness and impudence to change this insidious attempt on your friends.

These people have likewise made a very recent and strenuous exertion to erect the capital into a corporation, invested with legislative, executive and judicial powers; and to preclude from the right of electing the members of such corporation, all but freeholders;—thereby endeavouring to disfranchise, and to reduce to a state of vassalage, three-fourths of the citizens of Philadelphia.

Another scheme which they made an effort to accomplish, by their proposed *revenue* system, was to mortgage all the taxes, imposts and excise, to the *Bank*; to annihilate the State-treasury, or to render it of no importance; and to “prostrate at the feet” of an aristocratic institution, the wealth, the power, and the dignity of the State!

Prior to the two last Assemblies, the *public creditors* applied, without success, for relief—Their securities could not *then* be sold for more than one-eighth part of their value.—In consequence of the judicious measures since adopted by the Majorities, the price of those securities has now risen to three times that amount; the interest has been regularly paid; and the funds for the payment of it are so well established, that it must continue, unless they should be deranged by a future House of Assembly.

The Majorities, for these two last years, have taken such prudent and effectual measures to diminish the principal of the debt due to citizens of this State, that of upward of one million of dollars, *principal*, a sixth-part of the whole has been sunk; and laws are now in operation that continue sinking it daily; which will lessen the interest accruing thereon, and consequently lighten the burdens of Government.—All this has been effected, without the imposition of any heavy taxes.—The tax assessed in the year 1782 alone, when the Republican party (as they term themselves) were the Majority in the Assembly, amounted to more than the aggregate sum of all the taxes since that period!

**FRIENDS and FELLOW-CITIZENS!**

Weigh well this important business—Judge from facts, and beware of those whose actions contradict their words—Trust not those who would betray you; men who consider Government as the exclusive right of a select few:—But honour with your suffrages those persons, who have approved themselves the friends of that Constitution, which imparts an equality of privileges to every class and denomination of citizen, that pay obedience to the laws. **A Constitutional Mechanic.**